



EMPOWER AND ACCELERATE ENERGY COMMUNITIES

FOR A DEMOCRATIC, RESILIENT, AND AFFORDABLE ENERGY FUTURE IN EUROPE

A Manifesto for the 2024 European Elections

This summer, record heat waves and extreme weather events dominated headlines. While the cost of living keeps spiralling up, carbon inequality is rising: The world's poorest and most vulnerable, who contribute least to carbon emissions and thus the climate crisis, are most affected by its devastating impacts. However, **the EU remains off track to meet its climate goals¹** while populist and reactionary voices are further demanding a dismantling of green policies. The community energy movement provides a solution to this poly-crisis: **A socially just, climate-friendly and citizen-driven path to achieve a 100% renewable energy system.** Accelerating renewables at speed and scale is vital, but involving consumers and communities is equally crucial. Relying solely on profit-driven models won't lead to an equitable and affordable energy transition.

As EU wholesale electricity prices have seen an unparalleled increase in the last two years, additional renewable energy installations for 2021-2023 have actually saved European consumers more than 100 billion euros². From Belgium³ to Greece, **energy communities have played a vital role in shielding consumers from volatile market prices**, ensuring resilience, stability and affordability in the face of energy crises, and alleviating the inflationary spiral that has been driving the cost of living crisis.

Yet it's not just their economic benefits that make them stand out: **energy communities embody democratic principles** by prioritising direct participation, inclusivity, collective decision-making and bringing out new non-profit-driven economic models based exclusively on consumer interest. They **empower individuals and communities** to shape their energy future. They also promote **ownership and social cohesion** by engaging in energy solidarity and by educating people about bottom-up approaches to energy issues and new ways to consume energy. As the democratic deficit grows and citizens feel increasingly disillusioned with politics⁴, **energy communities** act as inspirational champions cultivating local support for a swift climate-friendly energy transition.

A decentralised and 100% renewable energy system that prioritises the needs and participation of people is not only possible, it is imperative. It acts as a means to uphold democratic principles within the energy sector, ensuring that it is by the people, for the people.

1. https://climateobservatory.eu/sites/default/files/2023-06/ECNO_Flagship%20report%20-%20State%20of%20EU%20progress%20to%20climate%20neutrality_June%202023.pdf

2. <https://www.iea.org/reports/renewable-energy-market-update-june-2023/how-much-money-are-european-consumers-saving-thanks-to-renewables>

3. <https://www.ecopower.be/nieuws/1-november-forse-prijstijging-en-verandering-prijssysteem-voor-groene-burgerstrom-bij-ecopower>

4. <https://edoc.coe.int/en/annual-activity-report/11589-state-of-democracy-human-right-and-the-rule-of-law-2023-annual-report-of-the-secretary-general-of-the-council-of-europe.html>

In line with this vision, [the Community Power Coalition](#) presents this Manifesto prioritising key elements for the European Commission and Member States to address the current imbalances in the energy system, support the ramp-up of community-based renewable projects and harness their transformative potential as we must move towards a 100% renewable and democratic energy system:

1. Full transposition of Renewables Energy Directive II & III (RED) and the Internal Electricity Market Design (IEMD), and implementation of enabling frameworks for community energy

Member States have made significant progress in transposing the **Clean Energy Package** Directives, creating enabling frameworks and support schemes⁵. Yet, several Member States still lag severely behind. We ask the next European Commission to support and closely follow Member States in the proper transposition of the **RED II & III and IEMD Directives** and to ensure that Member States create robust regulatory and enabling frameworks that level the playing field for energy communities in the energy market. This includes ensuring fair access to grid infrastructure and markets, simplifying administrative procedures and permitting, and providing financial support mechanisms. Energy communities specificities need to be taken into account and should be mainstreamed as relevant actors across all energy market activities, including electric mobility, offshore wind, citizen-led renovations, and heating & cooling projects.

2. Introduction of specific national targets and measures for community energy in National Energy and Climate Plans (NECP)

Several Member States have already set concrete targets and specific measures for (collective) self-consumption and energy community projects in their NECPs. This sends a strong institutional and market signal of horizontalizing citizen involvement in the energy transition. We call on all EU Member States to create **national targets for community energy** in their NECPs and the necessary measures to achieve them while monitoring this progress in line with Art. 22(5) of the REDII. Furthermore, we strongly urge the European Commission to address and support the integration of these targets and the measures in their appraisal of the Member States' submitted NECP drafts. Finally, energy communities should be able to participate on an equal footing in all activities of **the energy market**, including cutting-edge technologies such as offshore wind (as specifically dictated in Art. 9(7a) of the RED III).

3. Financially support local communities in the development of Renewable Energy Communities

While EU public funds are available, Governments have yet to provide sufficient and targeted programs for energy communities⁶. Access to financing remains a significant barrier hindering the development of community renewable projects. We urge Member States to allocate specific public funds and budget lines, and unlock financing tools, such as revolving loan funds, to bolster consumers-led and community-owned renewable projects, accelerating their progress. Additionally, we call on the Commission to support managing authorities in devising tailored public finance programs that reward the additional social and environmental impacts of community energy projects. The Commission also needs to ensure that funding supporting energy communities is available and sufficient in all appropriate current and future European funding schemes such as the Cohesion policy or the RRF.

5. <https://www.rescoop.eu/transposition-tracker>

6. <https://www.rescoop.eu/financing-tracker>

4. Empower local authorities to support local renewable energy communities

Local authorities and energy communities are natural allies in the bottom-up energy transition. These, as local governmental institutions, should be empowered to use their knowledge and resources to create an enabling environment for community-led renewable projects. However an already existing enabling tool that many municipalities and even higher authorities don't know is that RECs - regardless of their legal entity as cooperatives, foundations, or others - are considered by the EU as Social Economy actors. This is important because this allows authorities to dedicate tenders specifically to them. Without this knowledge the **EU procurement law** unwillingly still poses a fundamental hindrance to local governments facilitating local energy communities through public procurement. To promote energy communities effectively, the European Commission should provide specific regulatory guidance about them, including the existing procurement rules that incorporate social and environmental criteria while avoiding legal action risks. Additionally, reducing administrative burdens, offering technical assistance and providing public financial support to municipalities across Europe will help them establish energy communities and deliver on the **REPowerEU** goal for at least 1 renewable-based energy community per municipality above 10,000 inhabitants across the EU, by 2025.

5. Unleash the potential of local community energy projects to address social challenges

Energy communities are distinctive for the social benefits they bring to local communities, boosting economies, empowering consumers, offering low & stable energy prices and fostering solidarity, particularly among vulnerable and low-income households. We urge the Commission to support Member States to put in practice mechanisms to enable the participation of **low-income and vulnerable households**, especially those experiencing energy poverty, to actively benefit from renewable energy communities in line with Art.22 (4) of the RED II, and leverage energy communities potential to deliver on key elements of the **Social Climate Fund**. In addition, we ask for further incentives to be provided and existing resources to be used for the establishment and operation of energy communities in **Just Transition Fund** territories to bring the benefits of the transition to local communities, tackle the energy needs of the regions and support local social and environmental objectives, including job creation. Energy communities with strong social impact (e.g., gender equality, youth and migrant inclusion) could be supported with public EU funds.

Our collective direction should be clear. **Energy communities stand as tangible manifestations of how climate-just solutions can concurrently embody social justice, collective action and democratic principles in the energy sector.** As we approach a defining decade for urgent transformation and climate action, the EU must prioritise and amplify the role of these communities in our renewable energy transition. **We call upon EU policymakers to unite behind this manifesto's vision, propelling the growth of energy communities for a democratic, resilient, and affordable energy future.** Let's empower and accelerate together for a 100% renewable energy future powered by community-based renewables.

7. See the SCCALE Community Energy Municipal Guide: <https://www.sccale203050.eu/out-now-sccale-20-30-50-community-energy-municipal-guide/>

8. [Social procurement \(europa.eu\)](https://commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/tools-public-buyers/social-procurement_en): https://commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/tools-public-buyers/social-procurement_en

9. Prioritising inclusivity, these communities could actively involve marginalised groups in renewable energy projects, addressing energy poverty - for example, by setting up energy sharing in social housing initiatives or in local public infrastructure to benefit local communities.

10. For example in Greece vulnerable households can be included for free in collective self consumption projects, whereby other members of an energy community subsidise their participation. To enable even easier participation, such benefiting households don't even have to be members of said energy community

11. https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/european-green-deal/delivering-european-green-deal/social-climate-fund_en#next-steps

12. <https://www.rescoop.eu/financing-tracke>

